

AMENDMENTS

Claims 1-35 (canceled.)

36. (original) Isolated viral interleukin-6 (v-IL-6) obtained by recombinant expression of the DNA of human herpes virus type 8 ("HHV-8") in an isolated cell.

37. (original) An isolated polypeptide obtained by recombinant expression of the DNA of HHV-8 in an isolated cell, and which comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.

38. (original) An isolated polypeptide having the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.

Claims 39-41 (canceled).

42. (previously amended) A fragment obtained from the human viral interleukin-6 (v-IL-6) of claim 36 that binds to an IL-6 receptor and which can competitively inhibit the biological activity of IL-6 in a suitable assay system wherein the fragment binds to the IL-6 receptor.

43. (original) An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising the sequence SEQ ID NO:1 and that encodes v-IL-6.

44. (previously amended) The isolated nucleic acid as described in claim 43, consisting of the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1.

45. (original) An isolated peptide having the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2 and obtained by recombinant expression of a DNA as described in claim 43 in an isolated cell.

46. (previously amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule hybridizing under stringent conditions to the nucleic acid identical to SEQ ID NO:1 encoding functional v-IL-6.

47. (original) A test kit for the detection of v-IL-6 DNA or RNA, comprising a nucleic acid molecule consisting of the sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 as claimed in claim 43.

48. (original) A composition comprising as an active ingredient the polypeptide as claimed in claim 37 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

49. (original) A composition comprising as an active ingredient the nucleic acid as claimed in claim 43 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claims 50-51 (canceled).

52. (original) A method of culturing cells in a medium using v-IL-6, comprising the step of adding v-IL-6 to the medium.

53. (original) The method of claim 52, wherein the cells are selected from the group consisting of lymphocytes, hybridomas, hemopoietic cells and endothelial cells.